Mr.

John and Peter Thee

U. S. A.

Dixon Iowa

Dr. Günther Gernstedt
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Britische Zone
D e u t s c h l a n d

English

Husum/Nordsee
July 7.

Dear John, dear Peter,

I hope this letter finds you and your parents in good health on your fine Dixon farm as I saw you last some years ago. I understand that your father wrote a letter to Dannewerk recently but as I had no time to go there for a few wee weeks I don't know exactly how the news were. But the rumour said that one of you guys came over here for fighting. Well, I had no chance to meet him on the battlefield, for I have seen action only in the Eastern parts of Europe where I was wounded three times. In spite of all I safely got through it all and I wish that the one of you who was over here got back home alright.

You are probably interested mostly in the family news, so I want to inform you that we have had much trouble in these last years. By the way, my father doesn't know anything about this letter, so don't mention it if you write back to me. He has been not dealt with in a fair manner, you know, it is only just a few days that he was fired (there is probably a man who wants his job and he gave the authorities wrong informations against him, as it seems to me). So being a man of sensibility he suffers pretty much. I wish there were more men of his quality in this world, there would exist much trouble then.

But I want to tell you more about the family. While I was released in August last year, Hans is still in a camp in Italy. He got through it alright, but they don't release prisoners of war down there. He is married like me, his wife lives at Heidelberg, they have a little boy. I myself married in 1942 and have a boy and a child. I picked up my family just a month ago. My wife's home was Silisia where she lived with her parents, when I was in the army. I could not go there when I was released as the Poles didn't let anybody in or out. So I didn't know anything about their fate till I got a cable a month ago saying that they all wer were in a camp for refugees in Westphalia.

We lost next to everything down there in Silisia and live pr sently in my dad's home in Husum.We have to start all over again which is pretty hard in these times of suffering and general distress.

My eldest sister has two children,her husband is missing My second sister lost her husband in the East.She has three children and lives with her father-in-law in Schleswig.My youngest sister is still attending high school but she will be through with it pretty soon.My eldest sister lived in Berlin,but she lost her home ina bombing attck and now she stays with us at Husum.My wife's elder brother was killed in Russia,the second brother is missing in Hungaria.So you see there is much trouble all round.

Hermann and Jürgen,the Dannewerk boys, got alright through the war.They both were wounded but they were smart enough to avoid the worst.But they will probably write to you for themselves,so I needn't go into their story.Uncle Hannes and Aunt Tine are getting old.Unfortunately they lost their nephew in the war to whom their little farm was promised. We see them pretty often and take care of them as much as we can.

I hope you too will write a few lines about the family How is Art doing and his family?

With best regards to everybody

Your cousin

Walter

P.S.I understand that Americans can buy now parcels through the UNNRA for their relations in Germany.How about giving me a loan and sending me one of these things.I shall be able to pay the 15 bucks back to you later.

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English

Husum / 1st of November.

Dear John,

I want to thank you for your letter which I got some time ago and which reached me in quite a reasonable time. I planned to write earlier but then there was always the hard work on a farm and then I wanted to tell you that the announced package got here alright. To-day I can thank you for this wonderful package which created quite a sensation in the family. In this morning' mail was the announcement that the package had arrived and could be recieved at the house of the community church. I just happened to be at home and went down myself and boy, what a weight lay on my shoulder on the way home. The food seems to have been destined originally for the American Army and is plenty good. We all thank you very much and you may rely we need it. By the way, the box was wonderfully packed and contained almost everything from W.C. paper to ham and eggs. We had quite a time inspecting everything and finding out what all the tins contained. Again, thanks a lot! There was even some chocolate in it which I'll keep for christmas for the kids.

As I see from your letter you too have a girl and a boy, both a little older than mine. My girl, Gisela, will be three years old in this month, the boy (he has my name) is just one year. There is only this "little difference" between us that your children have a dad with a fine farm and mine have one who had tough luck. Things looks so bad, indeed, John, for nearly everybody over here that you well understand how we envy people like you. But you probably read enough about the state of things over here that I need not repeat that. We Germans are certainly a people of some intelligence but so far we don't seem ever to make the right use of it. So again and again we are thrown back and there is too much despair in present-day Germany that there are not many people who believe that we have any future at all. I bet if the young German generation would have the chance to do it, half of it would emigrate and seek a new future somewhere out in the world. But as far as I can see they would go anywhere volonteerily except Russia. And only a few days ago we were informed that the Russians took quite a few experts and workers to the East which roused a storm of protest and anxiety in Western Germany. I know well that nobody would protest against similar steps from the part of the US or Britain.

But let us forget about politics and talk about agriculture.

As I could not find any job so far in the teaching line I have been working during the summer on a farm not too far from our place. The economical life in Germany is completely out of order, to say the least, so you just have to muddle through. I feel that it is a shame if a people has to waste its intelligence in this way. For after all it does not make much sense to study many years and to get your doctor's degree only to finish off with doing work on a highway or something like that. Well, I don't mind working on a farm - but I got a training to do something else and if I wanted to farm I might have saved much time and money besides. Sometimes I wish I had done that and if you want to changes places with me, alright then! But I know that you prefer living peacefully way out in the Middle East - I would do the same.

The farm I worked on this summer belongs to a young farmer who got it for six years. He grows mostly vegetables which make quite a deal of trouble. The weather was not favourable, too wet. In August we had rain almost every single day so that about 50% of his potatoes were rotten. He has one team of horses which must work awfully hard. The state of the machinery is pretty poor compared with yours or Pete's. As the food for animals is as short as that for people, he has only a few hogs and a few cows. Almost

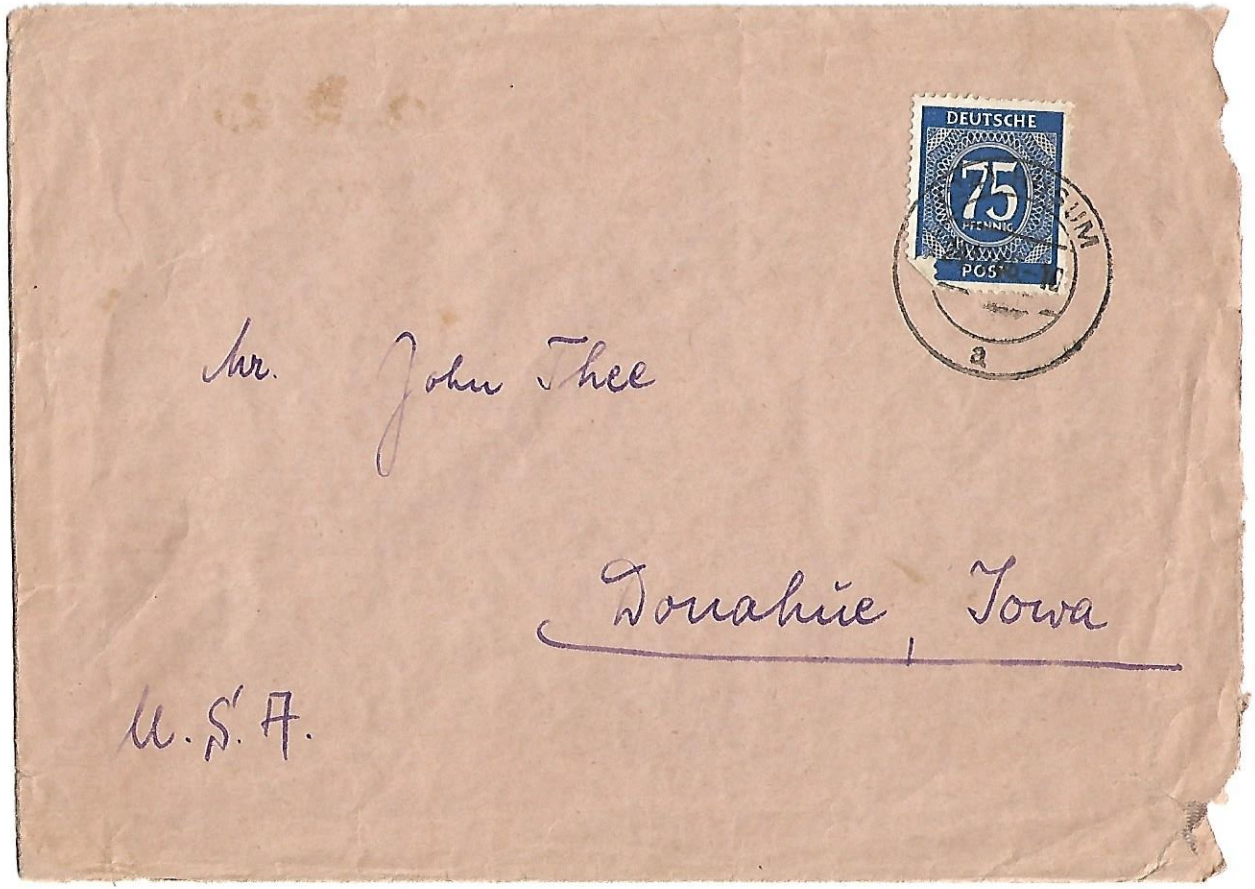
every product of the farm has to be delivered which is only comprehensive if you take the food situation in regard. So the farmer over here is far from being well off. Every now and then they fix the weight of the things he has to deliver and that is almost more than is bearable. Of course, he gets the money for his products – but he does not want the money. The value of money is very low as you cannot buy anything. There is an all-round rationing system as everything is scarce from a simple nail to a radio set. So you would never get a potato from farmer for money – maybe for a cigarette, though. This is the situation everywhere. This scarcity of products gave rise to the black market where they pay fantastic money for simple things. Though the authorities fight against it, they cannot suppress it. The black market would be dead instantly if we were allowed to reorganise our industries. This again is politics and the trouble is that the big Four or three cannot find a solution acceptable to each of them. –

Do you still remember the night when we drove to that Fair in your neighbourhood with the throwing contest? Here was a fair the other day where one was to throw down a pyramid of ten little tin cans with three throws to win. I got the first pyramid down with one ball and the next two balls brought down the second one. Good shot, hm?

That much for to-day. I hope to hear from you and your family again, say hallo to Pete, Art and your Dad!

With many regards from all of us

Your Jurtha.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English

Husum 22nd of Dec.

Dear John,

a few days ago I recieved your letter from the 4th of this month which made really good time. In only eleven days it made the trip from your place to our home which is a faster time than that which the average letter now needs for the tour from Berlin to Husum. It is true, however, your letter was not delayed by the censor who does not inspect every letter as it begins. I wonder how the road looked between Donahue and our country here. We, at any rate, have deep winter and if your package – for which I want to thank you in advance – makes as good a time as your letter, Gisela may well use the snow suit. As a matter of fact the present cold here is unusual for our country for we have seldom so deep temperatures and so much snow before Christmas. The more common climate for this time of the year is rain and fog which are perhaps still less comfortable than the present cold weather. But how about your climate. According to theory you must have really cold winters as your summers are better than hot. I still recall what I a headache the warm noons used to cause with me during my visit on your dad's farm at Dixon.

Such a grim cold is bad when you have only little material for burning. Our house has central heating which we cannot use because they don't give us coal. With you the miners strike – here they work but most of the Ruhr coal goes abroad. So I got a little furnace and fire turf, the same stuff which the farmers use all the time as your Dad will know from his home at Dannewerk. I dug it in the meadows last summer, or rather at the end of May; the sun dried it and it burns not bad. The only trouble is you need quite a bit of the stuff. What they give you on the rations is not much. Our country here is not wooded which might be a substitute for coal. They started to cut all the alleys in town only to have something to burn. And you got to be on the guard or they will steal your wooden door to burn it. Schools and other public institutions, however, get enough burning material to be kept going. But the remnants of our industry suffers badly from the lack of coal. Again you people are lucky to be so independent. It looks like the best thing that may happen in these days: to be a farmer in the Middle West.

Meanwhile I understand that Lewis called the strike off. I wonder why. At any rate it is good that he did and not only good for the US. The consequences had already begun to effect many countries

in Europe. But the question here is often asked: may Lewis take up striking methods in the near future? People don't quite understand why he declared the strike at all. But most of them don't realize that the American money still has a high purchasing power which is not the case over here. Before the war a dollar was equal to about 2.50 mark. The official prizes for rations etc. may work at the same proportion. But the black market - which knows no rations and which might be called the free market - works on a different scale. I am told that they pay about 5-600 mark for a pound of coffee etc. When I was a prisoner of war in a camp shortly after the breakdown, I recall that many soldiers had fantastic amounts of money on them. Being seperated from the civilian world and supposing that the money would lose all value they paid 500 marks for one cigarete. This was about the greatest humbug I have ever seen. By the way, such a life in a camp is perhaps the most terrible thing that a man can imagine if he likes freedom and is still more unbearable than sitting in an air raid shelter when the bombs howl through the air. A noise which one cannot easily forget and perhaps the best propaganda for peace.

You ask if all the contents of your first food package were usable. Yes, John, they were and very good too. Being a reasonable house father I started rationing the package so that we shall have

a few particularly delicious things for Xmas. As such we kept things like coffee, bacon, butter and peanuts. And when we eat those things & drink them, we shall think of you and I'll tell my wife and the kids how it looks on your farm and what a fun I had when I was allowed to drive the tractor and when we were on the fair.

My wife could not go Xmas shopping because you don't get anything reasonable. But you may rely that I worked a few nice things myself for the kids. I built a nice doll house for Gisela which looks cute and did not cost a penny. Tell Janice to come over here and take a look. She'll certainly like it. And the boy gets a little horse which he possibly will recognise as such. As he is only 14 months old he is not so sensible towards presents. Probably his sister will like it more than he. He is already a good runner – he overlapt the stage of walking and started running right away. Takes after his parents who are good sportmen, both of them. His second outstanding quality is that he roars like a lion when his relations with the world are unsatisfactory. I could not tell if he takes after me in this respect, too. Thirdly, he has a fine sense of humour and I ~~agree~~ admit that I like this particularly. He like his sister suffered from the whooping cough but fortunately they feel much better now. How is the health of your kids?

From the rest of the family I must tell you that my father has got back his old job and that my mother recovered fairly well after having suffered from something like a nervous breakdown. She was in a hospital for about a month. You must have good nerves indeed, to master life in these days. It is particularly hard on all women who take life a little too serious when one should laugh at all the mess. And when living on a small space with so many folks, you are easily liable to nervous trouble. There have come a couple of millions of refugees from the East whose state is simply deplorable. Lots of them are good farmers - without a farm. Some of them are of minor quality - as anywhere. Over on the old farm the oldest boy fell in love with an 18 year old girl (a refugee) which created much trouble as I think I told you before. Last Saturday he married with his parents approval. The family did not participate. It is pity, the whole affair. The boy is really a good-natured fellow, but in this respect he is making a terrible ass out of himself. The chief trouble is, namely, that the girl is not worth anything on a farm. So his father is not going to give him the farm. The old folks suffer a good deal from this affair - but love makes blind. I tried to convince him what nonsense he

was doing - in vain.

I'm afraid I got to finish this letter, there is some work to be done. I am sure that you'll have a merry Christmas and we wish a good new year to all of you, you success on the farm and good health. If you go over to Pete's and Art's, say hallo to them and good luck to them and don't forget your dad. If he still feels courage to come over once more and see the old country? I would like to see his smiling face again and have a little fun with him.

Many regards from all of us

Your cousin Gunther.

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HOSOM 19.1.47

Dear John,

I hope you got my letter from December last year though perhaps not in such a short time as your lines use to reach me.

To-day I had good reason to be a little jealous of you for my wife declared quite openly if John were here, I would give him too Kisses, one on each cheek. I showed no ready wit, I should have given back if your wife were here, I would do the same. Well, John, you'll ash have these people turned quite crazy writing such nonsense. No, we are still relatively normal but this kissing proposal got started when Gretel looked at Gisela in her snow suit which arrived here yesterday. But really, it is not only a very practical piece of clothing, but the girl looks like Shirley Temple herself, you should see her, so cute with her blond curls under that fine cap of wine red colour. And everything fits as if was made exactly for her, I mean as if you had the exact size. All we can do presently is just to thank you very much for the suit and the shoes and all the other fine things which we really badly need. Imagine

want of fuel. We, too, only seldom left our room. I had enough to do to keep the Kids quiet if they were not sleeping (or if I was not sleeping). It reminded me somewhat of the times when I was a poor p. of war with the Russians with very little food and no kind of work whatever. One might have died of too much leisure. Then, too, we used to sleep at least sixteen hours a day, partly because we were so d-d weak, partly because all seemed so desperate.

To-morrow we shall trie to work a little outside again on the farm. There is still a piece of wood we are going to cut, poles for enclosing the different meadows of the farm. The soil is still frozen, it is not yet possible to get it ploughed. We did not get it done because winter-time surprised us too early.

What is going on now here and the great world, you'll know by the papers probably better than I can describe you. This winter has ended or will end with a terrible breakdown several of the optimists seemed still to nurse. The administration of the occupying powers has been attacked in the open and in a way which I cannot quite understand. This criticism is well known in England where people seem to share it. Of course, the responsibility for avoiding catastrophy rests entirely with England as far as our zone is concerned. Though the English

if these things had gone lost, said Gretel. But fortunately they have not, thanks God. Though presently the weather has suddenly changed from a terrible cold to a mild spring climate, I am afraid winter will come back once more. And if it should not become so cold again, the Kid may just wear the coat without the fine warm pants. She is quite proud of her new outfit and all the kids in the street admired her. Thanks go also to your wife who will have certainly assisted you with her advice. Sorry, I don't know her name yet.

You'll probably have your share of winter over there now. With us it was exceptionally cold with much snow and ice so that the whole life threatened to break down. Transportation became extremely poor so that the already poor stocks of coal and other vital things decreased immensely. In the big cities people started to die from cold and hunger. But then suddenly, after the state of emergency had been declared (I don't know to what effect), the weather changed and in a few days the last bit of snow had disappeared and the sun shone so brightly as if nothing had happened before. But according to the latest long period weather forecast another wave of cold weather is going to create another mess. We shall see. At any rate Cisela looks with new confidence into the future.

In those days of snow and ice there were only very little people that could go on working because of the

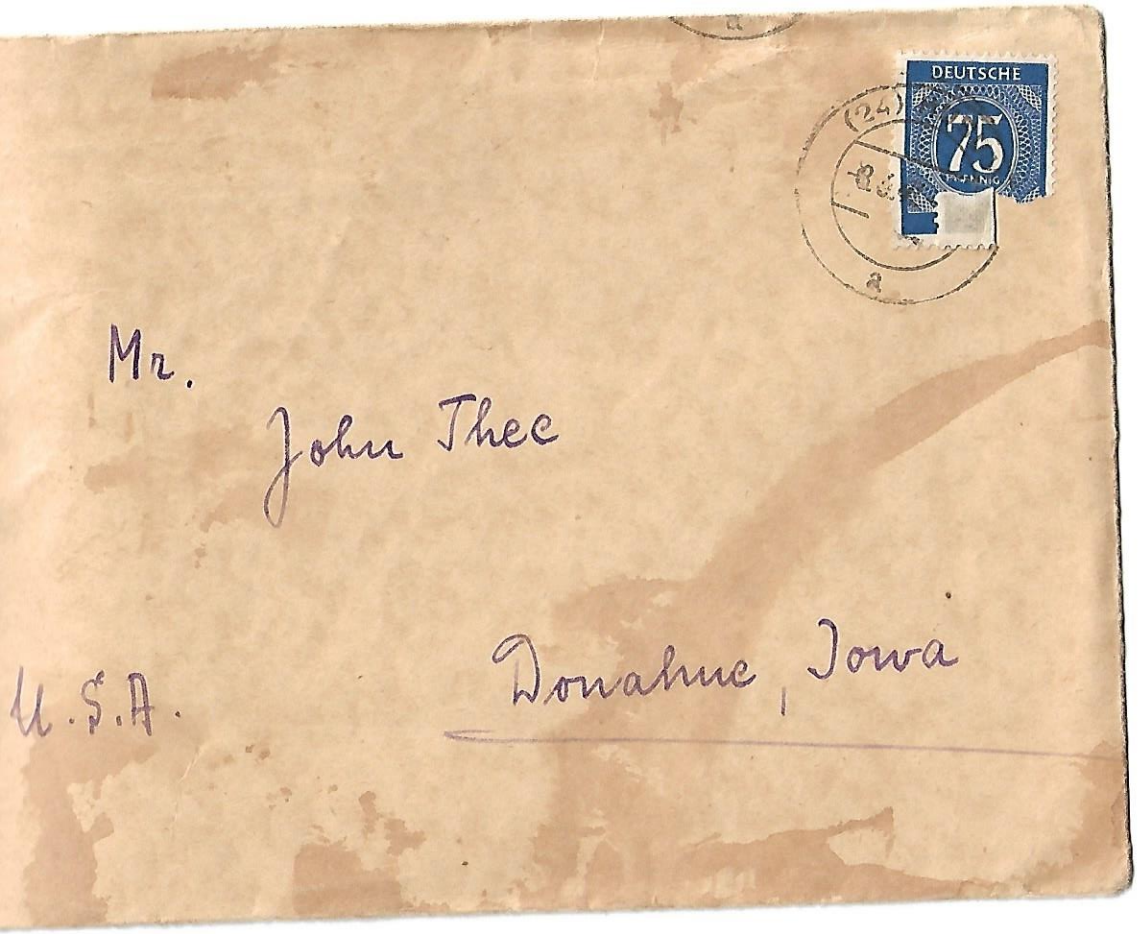
met with much good will here in the North, the public mood has changed quite a bit. The trouble is they believed to be able to get things alright without the help of German experts. I'm afraid we should have managed to get out of the mess a little easier and better.

What you will probably not know and what might interest particularly your Dad, is the fact that the Danes once more try to win political influence in Schlesing. A strong, so called minority movement in favour of Denmark was organised and this movement was and is supported with much bacon and butter. They publish Danish papers though people don't know the language at all. But there was certainly a certain shortage in paper for making fire burn and for other less delicate purposes. The English, however, don't favour this sort of thing and seem to have told Denmark so. Many people who want to become Danish seem to hope to escape the terrible consequences of the last war.

I got to go to bed, John.

I hope this letters finds you all in good health.
With best regards from all of us

As ever
Your Gunther.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Hisinn March 7th 47.

Dear John

This letter was due since a couple of weeks but there was always something to be done or the current was turned off. In the meantime you'll have probably got the slip from C.A.R.E. saying that I got the packages abright. From the date you'll see that they made a fast time, the mails are improving a little bit. Well, John, I thank you very much for the packages, I wish you could come and see how much these packages were a help to my family. This winter has turned out to be the severest since years and consequently our difficulties still increased considerably. Though it is already March, we had tremendous snow fall during the last days and the nights are still extremely cold. This situation creates many problems for transportation as the roads as well as the railways are blocked, at least temporarily. The coal situation is bad, even essential plants producing food stuffs had to close down

from want of coal. Thus the rationing system suffered and since a few months we don't even the get the promised amount of 1550 calories daily. So it is a grand feeling to be a little independent at least so far as you can take refuge to a stock of food stuffs sent from the U.S. Nevertheless I wish you never get into such a tough situation. It's neither easy nor agreeable to live in our country and side with little hope ahead. There are - even in our little town - lots of people who have no fuel to burn, they cannot even cook a meal in their home. They lie in bed and just sleep into the day, if they can afford it. When they get up, they leave their home and move over to one of the public warm rooms - Sometimes they don't even eat warm meal, they just eat a little dry bread or the like. Mr. H. Hoover was over here recently and issued a report concerning the food, clothing and housing situation. Maybe you read about that in your paper. Or are your roads too, blocked by the snow? Maybe you too, are cut off from all communications, but you probably would not worry about that. A farmer's life in your country is a little autocratic anyway, so it does not make much difference to you. Since I last wrote to you I have been busy with taking care of the fuel situation. A winter as this one is somewhat unusual and though I had a fair supply of turf, it proved too little, the climate was too bad. We have had now very cold weather

nice about three months with only little interruptions. It takes a lot of fuel to keep one room warm and to cook the meals, particularly for the kids. So far I managed to get that problem solved with different kinds of devices. My latest method was to burn a mixture of raw soot and paraffin which (by a mere accident) I could buy a barrel. It gives plenty of heat but it sure is a mucky affair, your hands look like hell when you have finished. If this cold weather is going on much longer, I'm afraid my fuel situation will become more than delicate. I imagine by now we have March and you should see the mountain of snow lying around everywhere. You hardly can keep the roads clear, in the garden the snow has the height of a person. Gisela is enjoying that sort of thing extremely. She has a big snow house in front of our home where she plays whenever the storm eases down. She is relatively insensible to the cold owing to your wonderful snow suit. You figured that - by the time we would get it - winter had gone; there you were mistaken. If she would not have got it, we would have to keep her inside all day long and you may know how kids like to be kept in a room! It is severe punishment on everybody. When she comes back, she usually looks like a snow man which does not make much difference to her.

The temperature is not so very low here, the deepest was about 20 degrees below zero which, of course, is not the same as with you as you count by Fahrenheit while we have the Celsius system. Freezing point with us lies at 0° degree Celsius. But the silly thing here are the storms, easterly gales and blizzards which are much worse than just dry cold weather. The North Sea in our region has frozen since a few months, the flood scarcely seldom breaks up the ice. This is all the worse as our fishermen cannot go out and fish and it will be late April before conditions change.

Farming work will be very late this year. It will take a long time before the snow masses have disappeared and then the soil will be too wet to do anything for a certain period to come. The seed corn in the ground is probably all ruined so we have got to do the job anew. All these factors don't leave much room for optimism in the farming business. The cows must be kept inside much longer with only small stocks of food (hay, turnips) left.

I hope this letter meets you all in fine health. By the way, I forgot to ask you how big an acre is. I tried to figure how big your farm was, but I could not quite find out how much an acre is as we count by hectars or "Morgen". So you may give me a hint when you have time to write again.

So long, John and many kind regards from all of us to you and your family

Your cousin
Jim Ehret.

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BRITISH CENSOR
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Mr. John Rice
Donahue
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EXAMINER 4994 P.C. 90.

EXAMINER 4994 P.C. 90.

Mann Mordec Lomiers, 49
Schleswig-Holstein British Zone
Deutschland

W. Stern

English

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Hilsum 20th of April 47.

Hello again, John,

Thanks for your lines written a month ago as well as for the pictures of both your kids and of your home and perhaps I should add my special thanks for Evelyn's letter though that should not be my job. However I am not so sure whether Gretel will go ahead and dare to try her English. She is a little shy about that for though she can understand almost everything even without the help of a dictionary she feels not so safe when it comes to expressing herself in a foreign tongue. Maybe I shall help a bit for she was very glad to have Evelyn's letter and would certainly like to answer. I, too, was glad to become acquainted with your wife even if only by a letter; but to a certain degree a letter may tell very much and with the normal amount of imagination one may figure out what a person may be like. Well, John, you know me, I am not so shy and I don't see any reason why I should not tell you that - judging from that letter - I think your choice was true. Now I wrong saying that Bobby takes

after his father while Janice - a really cute little girl - might come after her mother? Bobby seems to remind me of Art's boy whose name I have forgotten though I have often tried to remember it. He is just half a year older than our boy who will be two years next October 22. Janice is a little older than our little blond devil Gisela. She'll be four next Nov. 27. As a matter of fact all our birthday's lie pretty close together, they fall into one week. Gretel was 30 last Dec. 3 and I was 33 the day before. In the picture Bobby must have been as Dicker (that's how we call him) is now. That's to say, you then had to watch him pretty closely or he might do all sorts of mischief in the line of grabbing everything he can get (knives, dishes, scissors, well just everything) and in the line of performing involuntary acrobatic stunts as climbing on tables with succeeding somersaults.

Well, John, I am well acquainted with what you describe as your doings after supper time. That is exactly why I am usually writing on Sunday afternoon. When I was walking home last night - the farm lies at a distance of about

three miles – I always fell asleep before reaching home. It is pretty hard to walk that distance twice a day and then work all day long. With spring time coming so late, all the usual work has to be done in a much shorter time. After the snow had gone the fields were so wet for quite a while that you could not start ploughing immediately. Then there is the trouble with re-sowing for almost all winter crops have gone. During the first part of winter we had too much frost and dry gales that all harvest sowing was in vain. Now you have a hard time and can't even get the seed you want. We are growing lots of vegetables like peas, beans, cabbage and that sort of thing gives you much work. The pastures are not yet green here so we have to keep the cows and hogs in the stables which creates food problems similar to our own. From your descriptions I realize that your farm work at the different seasons of the year does not differ from ours essentially. We, too, have been cutting bushes and have cut posts for fencing. The main difference lies in the machinery and then, of course, we are growing

different things. There comes to my mind a question which somebody put to me the other day and at which I was completely at a loss. It concerns the corn you grow. Could you explain the whole process to me from the sowing to the different stages of products? Don't you have a mechanical picker for corn? I seems to remember that people used to pick it by hand and that even big shots once and a while had a little competition in that sort of things. As a matter of fact we are being fed right now by bread consisting to about 80% of corn which is very unusual here. And it sure produced some disorder in many people's digestion. Forever we shall be lucky if we get over these coming months with corn bread for all our own farm products have gone and we have to live on imports to the next harvest which must be late after that long winter time. – You asked about Uncle Thomas tractor. Well, I have not been over there on the old farm for a while; when I was there last they did not have one though they were promised one. I even doubt if they have got it by now. He was to have

got it by last May, that is to say a year ago. But if he should have got it by now I am positive that it will be a German made because Hermann told me the factory they had ordered it with. They are producing tractors over here since some time but by far not even to meet the demand. If the U.S. would import such a thing into Germany, I am sure that the American zone would get that first. But still I don't believe that this is so as we would not know how to pay for it. I have seen a few of these new tractors which were reasonably good. They were built by the Hanomag Company at Hannover, one of the bigger German plants producing cars and agricultural machinery. In the course of next month I'll probably drop in at Hannover and then I'll ask Uncle Thomas how far the tractor business is. On the whole I think he has been too slow to get the machines when he might have got them easy. Now, of course, he has got all the money he might want but as a matter of fact you don't get anything for it. This, however, is the state of most farms up here. I still remember last year when they had to plough many of their pastures in order to create new fields

for potatoes. When the harvest come they all seemed at a loss how to get the things out of the ground because there was just one machine in the village. Uncle Thomas had to plant I think a few hectars of potatoes which is quite a lot. Of course, they never did that sort of thing before, it might be excusable therefore that there was not the necessary equipment. But it is the same with threshing. And, of course, they could have had a tractor for years. It is, however, a tradition over there to save the money and do the job with the least expenses. In the long run I'm afraid that must turn out as short sighted. Now I have looked a little deeper into farming over here, I get the impression that there must have been very little spirit for progressive enterprise – perhaps most farmers were too old and conservative. Take Uncle Thomas, he is now seventy and still the boss. And this is rather the rule, people work as long as they can. And old age is usually hostile to modernisation, old people stick to their old ways and have a deep mistrust to everything that is new. Maybe I'm exaggerating but still this

is the impression I have got.

Presently there is much fuss being made about what they call "ground reform". The movement started in the Russian zone and was carried through by the Socialist parties. All big land estates over 100 hectar were broken up and given to small settlers who now own about 5-10 hectares. They say that these small farms would bring about better results which seems to me very doubtful. This is just the reason which propaganda tells you. I am afraid this is not all the thing. The real idea was to carry through Socialist ideology no matter if that is desirable from practical necessity or not. The issue is not so clear in our zone, though the Socialist parties propagate the same sort of thing. There might be some sense in it when breaking up the big estates but if you create so many small farms you will be certainly at a greater loss pretty soon than before. For these small farms may just be able to produce enough for the farmer's family but nothing more. But our agriculture must be able to feed millions of people and one should say to hell with all ideology if it violates practical needs.

I sure should like to have a look at Europe and the world as seen from a Donahue farm. How do you feel about the next years? Should there be new trouble ahead of us? I realise that world conditions are very much a function of the relations between the U.S. and the USSR. Could the difficulties as they appeared again and again be straightened out as result in over new tensions? How do you feel about that? I am getting original Moscow papers which after some studying I can read pretty well. It sure is interesting to see the communist viewpoint but then realising the gulf between East and West I feel bad to say the least.

Well, John, maybe you answer my questions occasionally. It is time for me to stop and go to bed; I had interrupted the writing because the weather was so fine and I watched a soccer match. Now it is already ten o'clock.

Best regards to your family
from all of us.

Your Günther.

Krisum 22nd of April 87

Dear Evelyn!

Well, I will try to write my first letter in English. It was a very delightful surprise, when your letter arrived, seeing that you, Evelyn, had written also and told us about your life and children. Many thanks for your dear lines and pictures of your children. Unfortunately we can't send you any of our two kids, because the photographer has no time for making pictures and on the other hand I was obliged to sell the fotking camera in Silesia. After the Polos had come I had no money to buy food for the children, because the prices were so high. So I was bound to sell a lot of clothing and other things.

I think our kids are the same little devils as yours. They are so superstitious and vivacious that it was a little too much noise in the dirty room we lived during the wintertime. I feel with you, that the silent eveningtime is the best of the day for working something in quiet. I am also sewing the clothing for the children and my own for myself. It makes me a great deal of joy and my mother is helping and informing me. (*) She lives with us, because my father was also evacuated out of Silesia and now works as a teacher near Köln. But he still has no dwelling for his family. I am glad I have my mother in Krönne because the shopping is so difficult. Often one must stand a few hours in a long line before getting the things you want.

I must thank you once more for the

(*) Personally the only trouble is the lack of material.

pretty sweet suit, you sent us for Linda. It fits so fine as if Linda had served as a model in Chicago. It was bitterly cold till April, so she wore it every day she went out of the house. In the summer it is not so difficult with clothing for the children. I thank you for your offer to help us out and I'll let you know if I need something.

John has helped us a great deal by his food packages. We certainly wouldn't have got over the cold winter so well if we had not got sufficiently food in this way. The freatest evil as far as food is concerned is the ~~lack~~ small quantity of fat and butter we get on our rationing cards. In the last time they have shortened even the fat ration of the children, now they get only 7 ounces of butter for four weeks and about 2 ounces of margarine. Up to

the next trip I suppose we shall experience some more cuts. Sometimes I am desperate because the time does not become a little better for us. There is no hope of getting an own home for which I am longing so much, or furniture or any thing for a right household. We are always wanting. But I am glad that there are the kids with their cheerfulness, who banish the gloomy thinking and I keep myself busy enough with sewing, darning and taking care of them.

It is not easy to write this letter in English because I only learned it in school till 1936. I hope you can understand, what I mean. I also must use a dictionary, but it sure gives me a lot of fun to write to you. In the course of time I guess I'll get some practise and I hope you'll help me to polish up my English a little bit. To-day it's bed time, so let us come to an end.

With dear regards from your

Jrebel

To

Bobby and Janice Thee

c/ Donahue / Iowa

U.S.A.

Dr. Gunther G[illegible]
(24) Husum/Nordsee Lornsenstr. 4[illegible]
Schleswig - Holstein
British Zone Deutschland

English

Husum May 11th.

Hello Bobby, hello Janice,

you probably don't get so many letters and surely none that come from a country beyond the big water, a country which is so far away that it would take you a few weeks to reach it by train and, Bobby, if you take Dad's horses it might last still a little longer. I imagine, Bobby, you still cannot quite understand what Uncle Gunther is talking about but Janice, you'll certainly if mother reads it to you, for you are already a little lady that will attend school pretty soon. Well, you kids can celebrate your birthdays pretty soon and that's why Uncle Gunther and Aunt Gretel as well as little Gisela and Dicker join in calling over the seas: Happy birthday to you! And we send you all our best wishes and we hope that both of you will always be good kids to both Mom and Dad. We would certainly like to send you some nice gifts —

a fine horse to Bobby and a nice little doll to Janice – or don't you like to play with dolls, Janice? – but since we have so bad weather over here, recently we had something like an earthquake and bombs fell from the sky like rain – we just cannot send you anything presently, but wait a little longer and then we will catch up again. Meanwhile your Mom will take care of that, I'm sure. She will give you all the candies you can digest. It's too bad that we have not got one of these fast aeroplanes so that we might hop over the ocean and drop in with you for your birthday celebration.

Well, Janice you once asked whether I have horses as Dad has. No, I have not got any, but a friend of mine has. You know he too is a farmer and much further works on that farm and so he sometimes has a few horses too. You see the other day I took one of these horses and a little wagon full of sand which I drove home into Gisela's sand pit where she uses to play in, to bake cakes and all that. And then I took Gisela on the wagon and

all the kids of the neighbourhood and drove them once round the block. You will understand how they all enjoyed it. And then I took Gisela out on the farm and she even took the horses reins and drove all by herself. The farm looks very much like your place but Gisela had not been there much before and it is something new for her to see the cows and the hogs. For you know we live in a little town where you find many buildings and much traffic, cars and trucks and railways. And there live many, many people that use to be well-to-do people but who are mostly very poor and have not got much to eat and bad dresses. But the sun shines here just as clear as over your farm and then there is the sea where you can take a fine bath when the hot summer days come and near the sea behind the dikes there are many fine horses, lots of cattle and sheep funny to look at. Do you like bathing too, Janice? But I am afraid you have not got a sea near your farm but may be mother took you to a pool or maybe she puts you into a tub which you certainly like as does

Viola. She uses to splash so much that the whole room looks rather like a swimming pool. And Dicker knows that business still better. You will probably like to know how we look. So I may tell you that to-day I made a few pictures of all of us. I hope that they turn out well and that the film was still o.k. So in about a week's time we may be able to send you our latest snapshots.

I am afraid I must stop here, we are about ready for our supper. Once more we send you our best wishes and many regards.

Uncle Gunther.

Say hello to Dad and Mom.

OPENED BY

OPENED BY

OPENED BY

BRITISH CENSORSHIP
2856
GERMANY

Mrs. aut. Hr. John Thee

Donahue / Iowa

U.S.A.

Dr. Gunther Gerbstedt
(24) Husum/Nordsee Lornsenstr. 49
Schleswig-Holstein British Zone
Deutschland

English

Shoe size

EXAMINER 6450 P.C. 90.

EXAMINER 6450 P.C. 90.

EXAMINER 6450 P.C. 90.

Husum 25th of June 47

Dear Evelyn, dear John,

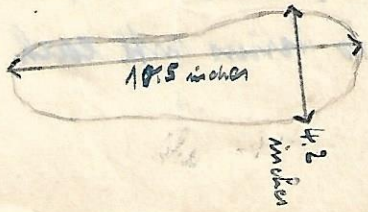
thanks very much for John's letter which was written just about a month ago and which revealed much that was a secret to me – I mean all those things concerning the growing and harvesting of corn. As a matter of fact lots of people among farmers here were interested in corn and they often asked me about it supposing me to be an expert in American affairs. Then I always was at a loss and I finally decided to ask John who gave me the necessary information, the "inside dope" as you would probably say.

—

I'm sorry John, (– I don't dare to excuse with Evelyn) here I fell asleep for the first time and then there was so much work all week long that I had to wait for to-day (Sunday) to continue my lines. But I know you do understand this weakness because you seem to experience it yourself now and then.

Well, I'm afraid I'm a bit more tired than you after coming home, for I got to walk really quite a distance every day. You don't seem to believe that but I checked on my assertion that I had to walk 3 miles to the farm and I found on the stones on the high way the figures 4.7 which means that from Husum to that farm there is a distance of 4.7 kilometers which is just about 3 miles. It's quite a walk, I agree but in the war they taught me walking. If I would tell you how many miles I walked in the war, John, you would not believe it, I'm afraid. Still I too would prefer doing most of the farm work in a sitting position. You talked about loading manure. You say you load it with a fork. But I remember you had a car or rather a waggon which spread the manure itself. Don't it so? You got to do it with a fork and that's quite a job for we are very short of artificial manure (or how do you call the stuff?). It's all a bit primitive. Everything is rationed but

Still I believe that most of it is being traded on the black market. Imagine since I was released from Russian captivity they did not give me one piece of clothing nor shoes. Still the papers are full of figures of production. Do you remember when I left you, Uncle Hermann gave me a working suit – I forgot how you call it – for my father. I am still wearing that but before long there will be only remnants left. It is been patched lots of times but the point of "complete breakdown" is pretty close. I remember you once wrote you could get clothing military colour, maybe old army tents. If you still have the chance you might do me the favour and get something for me. I don't care wearing that, it's better than nothing though I certainly have your feeling against anything military. If they are selling surplus stocks of army shoes too, you could help me out in this line too, though presently I run around only barefoot which won't do however as soon as the summer is over. I measured out my foot and found the following figures: it's the outline of the foot, of course.



The shoes, of course, should be somewhat wider. We usually measure by centimeters and the corresponding figures are 26.3 cm and 10.3 cm.

Right now we are having tremendously warm weather which is very unusual here. Such a climate is poison for farming. The meadows are very meager and the first hay cut was extremely poor. Farmers are worrying already about the next winter. But will farmers have to feed the whole population? As you will know from the papers the food situation is a single catastrophy; they cannot meet the very scarce rations since quite a time. We are certainly trying our best on the farms but the German problem cannot be solved by us alone; we need outside help. They took away too much valuable country in the East and forced us together on a narrow space. This is against reason and most of men's result in new troubles. From your letter, John, I see that you are not too optimistic about the situation. If you could see things with your own eyes, you would not feel any better. They are holding many conferences and they are working out plans, but up to now they could not come to terms with each other and we suffer from that.

Lots of rumours run about new complications between the Allies, many people predicting a new war pretty soon. Here they are building a new air port after the old one was destroyed. All that does not make much sense. Many people explain the shortage of meat to everything by saying that new reserves are being built up etc. Of course all this adds to the universal unrest.

Anyway, farming in Iowa seems to be safer than living over here. By the way in the news they talked about big inundations of the Mississippi. I hope you don't have any trouble from that in your place.

I am enclosing a few pictures to-day which I announced some time ago.

I got to stop here, it's about noon.

With many regards from all of us Your cousin

Gunther.

OPENED BY OPENED BY OPENED BY

BRITISH CENSORSHIP
AMMAN
2555

Mr. John Thee

Doradue, Java

N.S.W.

Dr. Günther Gerhardt
(24) Husum/Nordsee
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Schleswig-Holstein
British Zone

German
English

EXAMINER 8996 P.C. 90.

EXAMINER 8996 P.C. 90.

EXAMINER 8996 P.C. 90.

Hiesum 19th of Nov. 47

Dear John,

time seems to march on with an exceptional speed in these days for the date at the top of your last letter shows September 14 and still I did not answer. So thanks for your lines, John, with the confidential news that you, too, suffer from laziness at least as far as writing letter is concerned. This feeling is not entirely unknown to me. See, you must have had a wonderful trip this year. From my own tours in the US I have left all the maps so we could easily follow your track. By my own experience I know the beauty of the western parts of the US though I did not exactly touch all those regions you toured. The national parks really belong to the most beautiful spots I have ever seen and this means quite a deal for I have travelled quite a bit in the old and in the new world. I imagine that Uncle Hermann really enjoyed the tour for I am sure that this was his first grand tour except this one which brought him over the Atlantic. The older generation, I'm afraid, worked very hard and had not the time for such leisure. I would be glad if I could take my own car and take my old folks round Europe. Unfortunately this is impossible as you know. The old world is upset and who knows if it does not live on the eve

of even greater troubles than it ever experienced. My old folks, too, did not too much travelling. Except one nice trip north by sea (up to the North Cape of Scandinavia) where they met each other they have not seen too much of either Germany and the world. I always planned to take my mother down to the Alps for winter sports as soon as I could afford it by myself but then war came and the disaster. In the meantime she has grown older and her nerves are pretty poor so I don't know if I can ever venture to put her on skis again to shoot down the rapid slopes in the mountains. As a rule, I often met old people on skis, they were over sixty years of age, but most of them were Englishmen and used to sports since early ages. Dad never showed much interest in any kind of sports, he probably would never step on skis. I imagine he would feel a bit like a fool. Of course all this is a matter of education which differs from generation to generation. He is at his best when he can sit on his arm chair, to read a good book and smoke a pipe of our home made tobacco.

Well, I almost forgot to mention that your package arrived here in good shape. Thanks a lot, John, for the wonderful shoes and the fine overalls, I hate to think that I have to wear them on the dirty fields. Everything fits alright. The leather is grand too, I have not seen or smelt such

good stuff for years. The shirts, too, are excellent and fill a bad gap in my drawers. Gretel always has a hard time to patch up the old ones and you know how your clothing looks after working on the field. Thanks for all. Things have not become better over here and they won't till the Big three really start playing ball with us and bring about basic changes. In spite of all conferences and talks and promises our economic life cannot recover because we have no economic unity, because the Russians take reparations from current production and because we have to work on with our old currency. There is lot of the old money, but it has no purchasing power. So we have virtually the effects of inflation and a black market on a secret basis. Of course the black market prizes are so high that the ordinary citizen cannot afford to spend so much. I realize that it will be extremely difficult to reform our currency because it won't be possible without foreign help. If they set down the value of the Mark to say one tenth, the consequence will be an enormous increase in unemployment and starvation of broad masses who now live from the money they once saved. Then we shall have the other extreme that is many goods on the market and no money to buy them. I don't know which will prove the greater evil. To-day the working classes are very bad off. They get the old wages and can buy practically nothing

beyond the poor rations on the rationing card. So many people are engaged in the black market where they can earn gigantic sums. This dirty business has spoiled our good manners to corruption and almost moral anarchy. Almost every body through whose hands run any goods participates in this game. If there is a shopkeeper who gets anything which is not sold on rationing cards, he starts (bartering) bartering. The farmer who ought to deliver most of his products for public use takes advantage of this system of barter and gets what he wants if he takes the risk. This is a very bad state of things which has become worse every month. There have also become known many cases of corruption on the part of the authorities so that public confidence is equal to zero.

Fortunately we personally have no chance to participate in this dirty business and "muddle through". On the whole I think we shall get over this winter safely as I worked enough to earn enough potatoes and vegetables and turf to get the stuff cooked. There is practically only one bottleneck in our little household and that's the supply with sufficient fat or lard. The trouble is that you cannot just eat plain vegetables or cabbage, you always need some fat or lard and the rations are so very meagre in this respect. I tried to solve this problem by feeding a few rabbits, but that does not quite do though it helps a bit. So if you could

take some of the land of your hogs and put it in cans and send it over here, you would help us very much.

The truth is that we all would be starving if we had to exist only on what we get on our cards. Last night there was a story in the news about an English woman who married a German after the war and had undergone voluntarily the experiment to live on our rationing cards. The other day they brought her into a hospital as a ruined woman with a loss of about 40 pounds of weight. She must have been a very idealistic woman but she might have saved herself that sort of trouble. Any body who is acquainted with the results of modern physiology might have told her in advance the outcome of such an experiment. It is generally known that grown ups need 1800 calories as basic nourishment, but then they must not work. Up to the present we get only 1550 calories and then we are lucky to get even that. Unfortunately the leading men of your country were not quite conscious of the disastrous effect of giving away our Eastern provinces to the Poles and Russians. I am afraid you have to pay for that a high price, or we shall perish. This has become clear by now and much clearness has been added by Mr. Byrne's book "Speaking frankly" of which you'll certainly have heard. It must be a best seller with you, I wish. I could have made the money. It will doubtlessly help to influence your congress in favour of the Marshall plan.

while I'm writing these lines Mr. Marshall will be flying to London for another important conference; I wish I knew what had happened there by the time this letter reaches you. I don't think that the Russians will gave way to reason and I'm afraid the outcome will be a definite partition of Germany, though not literally but practically. This will increase the general tension and no one can say where this will lead to. Two and a half years have passed since the last war ended. Many people are afraid that we are close to the next one. I am not quite so pessimistic though history is a strange thing. And human beings are as far off from using their reason and common as Adam and Eve when they were driven from paradise.

Peter was just asking me what title the book was going to have at which I am writing, so I guess I'd beta stop though you will have done most of your farm work by now and have time to read a letter from Germany.

Say hello to all your dear ones.

With best regards

Günther.

Kirsum, den 21. 11. 47

Dear Evelyn!

I thank you for your letter, that told me of your life in summertime. I understand very well, that the days seemed to be too short for doing all the work in the garden and in the house. I regret you very much for the illness of John and your children and I am glad that all are healthy again. One must sacrifice a good time of the day and even the night, when a child is lying sick in bed. Personally we all are so far in good health except an occasional cough or influenza.

How grand that you had such a wonderful vacation with John and your father. Over here it is not so delightful to travel because we depend upon the trains. But there are only a few ~~days~~ trains every day and these are overcrowded with people. One reason is that many families are forced to live at different places, which is a consequence of the war. So there are always lots of people, travelling to and fro. In June I travelled west with Gisela to see my father for some weeks. I often was in great care, that Gisela would be crushed by the huge crowd at the moment the train was coming in. In spite of that, we had a good time in the west.

In the last summer further, the children and I have gone several times to the beach of the north-sea for bathing particularly on sunny Sundays. More than to splash in the water the children loved to play in the sand and look for mussels. I for myself love to swim far out into the sea but further ~~is~~ always scolds me. For 3 days further and I went sailing on a boat with his friend and his wife. In spite of the shortness of this time, it was very fine for us and helped to forget the sorrows of the usual life. These were our little adventures, the rest was work and so the summer passed by.

A few days ago the first snow has fallen in the night. Gisela and the boy were very delighted in the morning over the white garden and believed that now the „Weihnachtsmann" would come soon on his sledge to bring ginger-bread and apples. I do not see the snow so gladly as the children, because I remember the cold of the last year. In your last letter you were so kind as to offer me your help, if I need something for the children. They both want long stockings. Heinz-Günther has none at all and Gisela only the two pairs, which John sent last year. If it might be possible for you to get them and send them occasionally I would be very glad. I took their measure: Gisela: the foot from the toe back: 7 inches; the length measured from the bed upwards 22 inches; Heinz-Günther 5½ inches and 18 inches.

I thank you very much for the dress and the material for another one you sent for Frieda in the package we recently received. And I also was very glad of the thread and the other sewing-materials. The dress fits well, and I like it very much. Frieda is looking very nice in it. When she put it on for the first time, she turned around in a circle because the frock is so wide and was swinging round her. I am so glad that you share my cares and help me out.

When the letter reaches you Christmas time will be not far and therefore we wish you happy days and a good time. With the best regards to you and your family sincerely

Fretel

Mr. and Mrs. John T h e e

D o n a h u e /Iowa
-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-
U.S.A.

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(24)Husum/Nordsee Lornsenstr.49
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English

Dr. Günther Gerbstedt
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Husum, January 17 1948

Dear John, dear Evelyn,

the merry days of Christmas are past and so is New Year's Eve inspite of the fact that most people don't dispose of the traditiona liquor to help the new year to be born. Surprisingly the step of the time has not slowed down a bit, the new year is on with the same old speed and maybe it's just the lack of a good drink which prevented people from getting better hope and from banishing that strange sens of futility which lingers all over the country. It was a little different at Christmas though the papers even then scared people by announcing the impending reform of our money. They did not scare us personally though, for in the course of time you get accustomed to this sort of unpleasant news and moreover such a measure does not make much difference to us because our money in the eastern zone seems to be lost anyway.

So we had a few really bright days at Christmas and I must say you helped very much to make them brighter as usual. You really did a fine job, Evelyn, when you surprised us with your gifts and I want to thank youvery much in all our name. You must excuse that we did not express our gratefulness any earlier. We have been putting it off from day to day to give Gretel a chance to find a free minute. But it seems she is too busy in these days so I finally decided to write to-day, so you may get the letter before Easter. Evelyn, your package was well-timed, it got here just a couple of days before Christmas so I could easily keep it a secret to the day when Santa Claus was officially due to show up. So it happened that he came with full hand and had even things for the grown up people which would not have bee the case otherwise. Gretel likes your shawl very much, but she almost overlooked the fact that the rubber ball was a present from Janice to her. Well, as it turned out, the kids decided that such a thing was much better for them and that even Santa Claus sometimes commits an arror. As a matter of fact they had never had and even scarcely seen a rubber ball, so you can imagine how it whirled through the room. Dicker was astonished at the wealth of the different picture books

and treasures them as highly as his sister and as his father does his writing paper and the marvellous handkerchiefs which do him good service. And then those brilliant painting books and the fine colours. I wish you could watch her sit quietly and patiently in fron of her book and paint the pictures. It is only Dicker who watches the whole procedure with much jealousy and sometimes even with malicious plans. As he is still too small for such business we decided to preserve the colours and one book to a later date. Of course, he would like to object to such a measure and would rather prefer painting the book all over and breaking the crayons.

Thanks, too, for the fine clothing and for the stockings. It was good you chose a larger size for at least Gisela is growing very fast in these days which is probably the reason for the fact that she looks a bit pale presently. It is true, there may be other reason too, for in this rough climate you cannot allow the kids to stay a longer time outside. But Dicker still looks like a little pink pig even if he was not outside for quite a while. His appetite is usuall better than Gisela's and he is always the first who cleared the dis You will have noticed similar things in the development of your children. It is not always progress which one observes. And this is not always true as far as the physical development is concerned. There occur even psychological regressions and Gretel might tell yo quite a story about Dicker. He is now two years and he was clean already for quite a while. Even in the summer when he was really very busy outside playing he rushed inside to tell his mother when he was due to take a seat on his pot. Then, all of a sudden, about a week before Christmas, he seemed to have completely forgotten to announce his intentions. Gretel grew very angry but this did not change the situation. The fact was that he obviously had completely unlearned what we took for granted. So he had to learn it once more. Fortunately it took him only about two weeks and Gretel is glad that her dirty business is over. Don't smile, John.

As I spent my Christmas holidays in 1938 in Florida, I had no chance to experience Christmas in an American family. Maybe it is much the same as over here. At Christmas Eve the mother goes with the children to church and in the meantime Santa Claus is supposed to have brought the Christmas tree and some presents. More realistically it looks like this: the father has to fix up the Christmas

tree with the candles(if he was lucky enough to get a few on the black market;in my case it looked very dark,but the farmer I'm working for gave me four candles and I cut them into two pieces ea so I had eight)and has to arrange the room.While I was doing this, Gisela probably watched more or less excited the service in the church,while Dicker was being neutralised inthe kitchen.Then approached the great moment.I lighted the candles and let the kids enter the Christmas room.This is a very bright and peaceful second full of charm and astonishment - but then the storm breaks loose. Each of the kids tries to find out what Santa Claus decided to present them.With rather primitive means I had built a little shop for them(which would not have been possible if I had not got these little nails from John),you probably know this sort of thing.Childr love to play the part of a shopkeeper.Unfortunately Gisela and Dick discovered this shop at the same moment,after they had found all the books and other things.Just like small eagles they rushed towards it and tried to bring it into their possession,Gisela fully realizing what it was and Dicker only instinctively feeling that it was something worth to fight about.They shrieked and fought and this was so funny that we could not help bursting into laughter. We were not even able from mere laughter ~~that~~to interfere so they continued their strange fight for quite a while.

It was hard to get them to bed on that night.We had lot of fun with them,but still we were glad when they finally fell asleep and we could quietly sit back and play a hand of bridge.

Now these merry days are past -life goes on in the same way. I need not tell you that things look pretty bad in Germany as every where in Europe and even in the world.If we look back to the end of the war,we don't see any real progress at all.Instead of more faith in general cooperation in the world we recognise that this world is divided into two parts and that all looks very dangerous. It is unfortunate for us that the line of seperation between the two parts runs right through Germany.As I have foreseen last fall a major food crisis is just about to break out in the first months of this year.The first signs of this crisis have led to the first major strikes.The situation becomes more serious since in the last days a communistic plan for revolutionizing Western Germany was made public.It is easy work for the Communists amidst a population which is starving virtually since the end of the war.To-day's

papers announce that our scarce rations must be further reduced and that several regions will have to get along with no butter and fat at all just to guarantee more food for the Ruhr district.

Well, that sounds worse than Christmas news. So to hell with it. Thanks again, Evelyn.

With all our best regards and good wishes for 1948

As ever,

Mutti

MIT LUFTPOST
PAR AVION

VOLLMERHAUSEN

Mr. and Mrs. John Thee

Donahue

Iowa

U.S.A.

Dr. Günther Gerbstedt
(22) Vollmerhausen
Gem. Gummersbach
Bürgstr. 16
British Zone
Germany

Vollmerhausen, April 8th 1949.

Dear John, dear Evelyn,

There has been a rather long interval in our correspondence and I'm not sure who exactly caused it. Maybe it is my turn to write; if this be so, I think I have a few reasons why I kept silent. First your dad was over here and one feels he should tell as much as a few letters can communicate. I had not much time, then, but I could take ~~twice~~ time-out over the week end and go over from Lübeck to Husum so that we really could get things talked about. I sure wondered how your dad would feel coming back into the old country after such a long period and I certainly got a kick out of some of his reactions. When I sat down at the piano playing a couple of modern songs, these left him unmoved. But when I stepped back half a century and played the tunes of those days, he sure got active! Heaven knows what kind of memories got awakened in his mind, but he sure skipped those forty years and to him they much have appeared little more than a week. When he left for the U.S. people did not yet play football over here, so I took him to our football ground: the weather, unfortunately, was lousy and this is not favorable to arousing somebody's interest in a new sport. Then I took him out to the farm I worked upon and this certainly interested him much more. Fortunately some farmer gave us a ride so we had no trouble walking the whole distance.

But then there was another reason why I just could not find much time to do anything besides studying. After going through this year of training I still had to pass an examination and that sort of thing is always annoying. You got to do quite a bit of preparation and when you don't hit the books you sure don't feel like sitting down and writing letters. The only thing then is either to go to the movies or to go asleep. In the first three months of the year I scarcely ever got to bed before mid night which is entirely against my ordinary habits. Of course, I had not time to go to Husum since your dad left. Only for Christmas I could go west to Vollmerhausen and see my family. But in March I got that exam behind me with an A- average and then followed a couple of weeks of holidays because the new school year does not begin before Easter. That gave me time to go for a few days to Husum and after that I took the train west to see my dear little ones and Gretel. I sure took a rest! Slept ten hours a day just to make up for all the lost sleep. When I came here we had beautiful spring weather. My father-in-law has a small piece of land for vegetables etc and we started getting that fixed up. The temperature rose to considerable height, you felt like in summer,

the trees came pretty close to blooming and then a few days ago the unavoidable break came: stormy, rainy weather, then it got calm and colder and this morning the meadows and hills and woods were white with snow. So we shall probably have to do the sowing all over again.

I don't think that you can be very busy outside, for after all your climate is not so much different from ours. So you have plenty of time to play around with your kids! It's particularly hard for them if they have to stay inside again after a few nice days full of outside activity. I had my share of that yesterday. As you once said, Evelyn, they can be a pest inside. For a short time they play alright; then the thing becomes tedious and they start quarreling. Well, you know the rest. Anyway it's good to have them healthy and a little wild than the other way round. I hope this letter meets you and both Jennie and Bobby in good health too. We are alright so far, I have a little trouble with a furunculosis, due probably to one-sided food. I had the same when I was discharged from the Russian camps of PWs.

One more week and we have Easter, "white Easter" if the weather does not change. But it certainly will. This year one can buy eggs already, though they are pretty expensive: 40 pfennigs a piece. By the way since our money was reformed (which is equal to losing your money) you can buy next to everything. As our production cannot meet all our demands, the price level must be naturally very high. Our main worry is the rising unemployment. So our problems shift from one field to the other: the basic trouble, however, remains the same: a lost war and a poor people. Even in the teaching profession conditions are very bad; still I hope to get a job pretty soon as much depends upon an excellent certificate.

We sure would be glad to hear from you soon – before the busy season comes around and keeps you from writing. I hope you enjoy yourself on Easter time and don't spoil your stomac!

With many regards from all of us

as ever

Gunther.

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MIT LUFTPOST
PAR AVION

Mr. and Mrs.

John Thee

U.S.A.

Donahue

Iowa

Dr. Günther Gerstedt

(24) Ratzeburg / Lübeckerstr. 25

British Zone / Germany

Ratzeburg, Dec. 11th, '49.
Lübeckerstr. 25

Dear John and family,

I hope this letter will still reach you in time to bring you all our best wishes and greetings for Christmas. I don't doubt that you'll have a good time in your quiet and cozy nook in Scott county (or, I'm afraid, you call it district, don't you?) having everything one cares for in this season. So one should rather tell you not to eat too much turkey and cranberry sauce, not to drink too much liquor (as far as the grown-ups are concerned) and not too eat too much candy (this is for the youngsters and probably the females too).

We shall be interested in some changes over here. Since I came back into the teaching profession, things have gone to the better. About half a year I had to live alone - with the family still waiting in the west. Then by some lucky accident I got an apartment on the first of Oct. So I could move in with the family. It's a nice one in the first floor of a house near our lake. I had to work in the fall vacations to get it into good shape before the children came. It was not easy to get furniture for our three rooms as we had lost next to everything. I borrowed some chairs and minor things from Father at Hessum, I bought some furniture for the kitchen on instalments (this is the reason why I'm always broke!) and then I got some from my uncle in the Russian Zone (which was not so easy to get over). So you see our main efforts in these months lie upon building our own household. What we can do without spending money we do ourselves, that's clear. I have developed into a fairly skilful painter and Gretel is weaving carpets to make the sitting room more warm and comfortable. She has quite a clever system, she

simply cuts stripes of old clothing and you would be astonished what comes out as a result. Then we got a sleeping room with a tremendous front of windows looking towards the east - just the direction of our most disagreeable storms in winter. You get to be an Iowa farmer to buy curtains for all the windows; so I manufactured paper-curtains (which you can roll up and down) to get some protection at least. It does not look too good and the other day some one called at the owner's and asked if we had moved out again (because the curtains were missing!)

But we feel quite comfortable and this is the only thing that counts. While outside we have terrible weather (storm, snow, rain) we are sitting in a warm room. Gretel is knitting and is telling fairy tales to the kids (Gisela's knitting too and Dicker has a similar job to do) I have finished manufacturing a bed for Gisela's doll; unfortunately I have not time enough to make all the presents for the children myself. Our pupils get grade sheets for Christmas and this means of lot of extra work to the teacher who has over forty boys and girls in his form. But ask Gretel: she always tells you that she has twice as much to do in the household than I.

This is the season for you, John, to take it easy. So take your pen holder some day and write a few lines about what's going on on the Donahue farm. Say hello to Pete - has he not yet found a wife?

With our best greetings to all of you, to Pat's family, Uncle Hermann and Pete from all of us

As ever

Gunther.

Happy New Year!
Much success and much money for your hogs!

MIT LUFTPOST
PAR AVION
BY AIR MAIL

JEDERZEIT SICHERHEIT
DEUTSCHE BUNDESPOST

BITTE AUCH DER
ABENDANGABE:
VERGISS
MICH
NICHT!

DIE POSTLEITZAHL

ZEBURG
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Mr. R. J. Thee

1037 N. Main, Apt. 5C

U.S.A.

Brookings, S.D.
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Dr. G. Gerhstedt
2418 Ratzebüng
Bahnhofallee 35

Ratzeburg, March 7th '77

Dear Robert,

thanks a lot for your nice letter and for your good wishes for the new year. I feel pretty bad because I've kept you waiting that long for an answer – but, as you will know – nothing is easier than to find plausible excuses. There is little point in returning your wishes with almost 20% of the year passed, still I hope that you are in good shape and doing a good job as a "housing specialist". I guess it's not too easy to explain to a greenhorn what you really do but considering the question of family housing and mobilizing my imagination I seem to see the point, that is to say that many people might use and even need the service of a specialist. On the other hand

as if such service is just offered by the state which implies that you are on the state payroll and particularly susceptible to financial trouble on the part of the state. You at least seem to indicate it. And when such a situation turns up the first victims of a policy of saving are educational institutions. Well, education we can get along without education! Adam and Eve had no need for it nor had the pioneers. You know this melody which is the same all over the world. I certainly do not want to belittle the threat to total peace coming from our Eastern neighbors, but when one compares expenditure figures for the defence with those for education things seem to be out of proportion.

Thanks for the latest news from the family, which has considerably grown since when I stayed with them almost 40 years ago.
In 1938 I won a scholarship for Hamford and stayed there almost long enough to be caught by the Second World War. Somehow I felt that I'd better go home which I did though originally I had planned to go west to Japan and India.
So I went in time to see the first squadrons of bombers fly towards England. I was allowed to complete my studies, got my Ph.D. from Berlin University, got my teaching diploma and was invited to join the army. I was lucky enough to survive with two brothers of my wife and the husbands of my two oldest sisters killed in action.
The first years after the war were pretty hard as you can imagine.

In 1949 I get back into the teaching profession here at Ratzeburg which is a town of 13 000 inhabitants not far from Hamburg. It's beautiful country, vast forests and many lakes. My wife – Gretel – and I got married in 1942. We have three children: Gisela is married, lives at Stuttgart, her husband is English and works on the faculty of Stuttg. Univers. He is a linguist. Heinz-Günther is number 2 and is active, like his sister, in education. He lives at Kiel, he is married with a girl from New Zealand. Their son Patrick is half a year old. Harald is Gisela's boy, aged nine. Heinz-Günther teaches English and Relig. Ed. His favourite sports are tennis, skiing and ball games. Gudrun is number three: she, too, lives at Kiel, teaches history and physical educ. She is the only one who has no British partner. She stays German in her choice

By the way, our children must be about your generation whereas your parents and Kit and Pete and their wives belong to my generation. I can imagine that much has changed in the U.S. and that the old ones do not always understand the young people of today. Having friends in California who have children, I have noticed what kind of trouble parents of today may have. Fortunately our children, though not being fans or conventional, tend to escape fashionable trends. They neither fell to the temptation of drugs nor did they go radical politically. Gisela is – perhaps on account of her age (33) and her successes in the profession – closest to conformity with the establishment and when we at times go all skiing in the Easter vacation she has

passionate discussions with her brother. Judi's great passion is China: she went there last year and is very enthusiastic about the achievements there.

Well, now about the old people. Gretel is a housewife with a couple of hobbies: tennis, skiing and political science. She, too, is a specialist on China and whatever books on China she can get hold of – they must be read. In tennis she still belongs to the first string in our club and when we go skiing, out of March, she does not miss a second. As you realize all of us are sporting people. The kids have always been among the top people in tennis here in the north and my wife has won many battles in the courts.

And I? I am teaching at a Gymnasium which is a school type non-existent in your

country. But you'll possibly be informed about educational conditions in Europe. Gymnasium in Germany, grammar school or public school in Britain and Lycée in France are very much the same. They are all based on selection with the percentage (presumably) rising to about 15%. So on the whole the level here is probably, on the average, higher as compared to your high schools. We send almost every year one or two students to your country where they attend high schools and our students get along all right though English is not their mother tongue. Presently we have a boy from Seattle at our school who wants to learn German. He will stay here only 3 months. He has brought along a football and yesterday I saw him and some of the boys (physical ed. majors) exercise throwing passes which evidently was a thrilling experience for all of them.

Well, I teach modern languages (English, French) and I used to teach physical education. But since I am also deputy head of our school I've got to be busy in the administration: supervising, organising etc. The result is that per week I've only 10 periods in modern languages. Today my English course are taking their English written final. Their job is the interpretation of a short story with a number of additional questions on structure, style and meaning.

Now, Bob, I'm glad to have heard from you and if you have time again drop a few lines. Say hello to your sister and all the other members of the family!

With many kind regards

Günther